

## Message Text

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S E C R E T BEIRUT 3405

EXDIS TREAT AS NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PDEV, LE

SUBJ: LEBANON INTERNAL: VIEWS OF FONMIN BOUTROS

1. IN JUNE 20 CONVERSATION AT HIS HOME, FONMIN BOUTROS WENT ON AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT INTERNAL SITUATION IN WAKE OF MASSACRE OF FRANGIEHS AT EHDEN ON JUNE 13. HE SAID HE HAD NO DOUBT ASSASSINATIONS WERE PART OF ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE SINGLE PARTY DICTATORSHIP OVER COUNTRY. SULEIMAN FRANGIEH APPARENTLY INTENDED TO REACT BY FREEZING THE PHALANGE OUT OF NORTH LEBANON. THE PHALANGE WOULD NOT ACCEPT THIS AND THERE WAS LIKELY TO BE BLOODY CONTEST. SYRIANS WOULD INTERVENE AND, GIVEN THEIR CLOSE CONNECTIONS WITH FRANGIEHS, WOULD FAVOR THE LATTER. IF PHALANGE THEN RESPONDED BY PICKING OFF INDIVIDUAL SYRIANS AROUND THE COUNTRY, SYRIAN POSITION WOULD BECOME VERY DIFFICULT.

2. IN THAT EVENT SYRIANS WOULD PROBABLY SEEK LEBANESE LEF-TIST SUPPORT AGAINST THE PHALANGE, AND THIS WOULD ADD ANOTHER

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DIMENSION TO THE HOSTILITIES. BOTH THE RIGHT AND THE LEFT WERE HEAVILY ARMED AND BELLIGERENT. EACH SOUGHT TO IMPOSE ITS OWN RULE, EVEN THOUGH THEY ALL WERE NOW SPLIT INTERNALLY. MEANWHILE, THE MAJORITY OF LEBANESE, WHO WERE MODERATES AND BELIEVERS IN A FREE SOCIETY, WANTING NEITHER A MARXIST SOLUTION OR A DICTATORSHIP OF THE RIGHT, WERE UNARMED, UNORGANIZED AND POWERLESS. THE ONLY INSTITUTION WHICH HAD ANY

COMMUNICATION WITH BOTH SIDES AND WHICH HELD THE FABRIC TOGETHER WAS THE GOVERNMENT. WERE IT TO DISAPPEAR, THE DE FACTO PARTITION WHICH EXISTED TODAY WOULD QUICKLY BECOME DE JURE.

3. THE GOVERNMENT COULD REMAIN IN POWER ONLY BY COMPROMISING. EVERYONE WAS URGING DECISIVE ACTION IN HIS OWN INTEREST, AND OPPOSING DECISIVE ACTIONS WANTED BY THE OTHERS. SELIM AL-HOSS WANTED MAJOR HADDAD TO BE CASHIERED FROM THE ARMY IMMEDIATELY. CHAMOUN WANTED HIM TO BE MADE COMMANDER OF THE SOUTH. A COMPROMISE HAD BEEN DECIDED UPON UNDER WHICH HADDAD WAS ORDERED BACK TO THE BARRACKS WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT HIS FATE WOULD BE DECIDED AFTER THE ARMY ASSUMED CONTROL OF THE AREA. THIS HAD SATISFIED NO ONE, BUT IT WAS THE BEST THEY COULD DO.

4. SIMILARLY, IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT TO USE THE ADF AS A POLICE WEAPON. COULD THEY USE THE ADF TO SUPPRESS A POLITICAL PARTY, AS SOME PEOPLE WERE DEMANDING? HARDLY. SO CRITICS OF THE REGIME REMAINED DISSATISFIED. IN THIS REGARD, U.S. ATTITUDE AND OUR SILENCES WERE OF CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE. IF PEOPLE CONCLUDED THAT WE DID NOT SUPPORT THE REGIME, THIS WOULD STRENGTHEN THEM IN THEIR OPPOSITION TO IT. (I BELIEVE HE WAS REFERRING TO BASHIR GEMAYEL, WHO HAS REPORTED THAT HE FOUND MORE UNDERSTANDING OF HIS POSITIONS IN WASHINGTON ON HIS LAST VISIT THAN HE HAD ON THE ONE BEFORE.)

5. I ASKED IF HE HAD ANYTHING SPECIFIC IN MIND. BOUTROS  
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SAID THE CURRENT RUMOR WAS THAT WE HAD DECIDED SARKIS WAS NOT THE MAN FOR THE JOB AND THAT WE WERE CASTING AROUND FOR A SUCCESSOR, WITHOUT YET HAVING MADE A CHOICE. I SAID THIS WAS NOT TRUE. I WOULD NOT CONCEAL FROM HIM THE FACT THAT THERE HAD BEEN CONSIDERABLE DISAPPOINTMENT IN WASHINGTON THAT SARKIS HAD NOT BEEN MORE. ...AT THIS POINT BOUTROS INTERJECTED "DYNAMIC". I SAID THAT WAS EXACTLY THE WORD I WAS GOING TO USE. NEVERTHELESS, WE CERTAINLY WOULD NOT ENTERTAIN THE IDEA OF TRYING TO HAVE HIM REPLACED. RATHER, WE HOPED HE WOULD BEGIN TO SHOW SOME DYNAMISM.

6. BOUTROS SAID HE KNEW WE FELT THAT WAY AND WE AGREED IT WAS A SUBJECT TO BE DISCUSSED AT MORE LENGTH.

7. COMMENT: LEBANESE CONCERN ABOUT BIG POWER ATTITUDES IS AT LEAST ONE FIXED POINT OF REFERENCE IN THE SHIFTING SANDS OF LOCAL POLITICS. I WILL HAVE MORE TO SAY ON THE SUBJECT AFTER CALLING ON PRESIDENT SARKIS AND PRIME MINISTER HOSS, BUT ALL OF US WILL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL ABOUT GIVING SYMPATHETIC EAR TO WANDERING (OR STATIONARY) LEBANESE NUTS.  
PARKER

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